Full Score

Aorta

short opera in one act

Rob Jones
Libretto: Tom Bronsema

Notes:

This short opera was a collaboration between writer Tom Bronsema and composer Rob Jones. It was written between February 2017 and January 2018 for the Opera Forward Festival 2018 in Amsterdam.

A rough English translation of the text is provided by the composer.

Storyline:

Ulrike feels that she desperately needs Eros to help her with the child, but also to save her from her greatest fear: loneliness. Lana is hopelessly in love with Eros but she doesn't know if he loves her back. Eros can't decide which women he should take, so in a moment of terrible cowardice he cuts out his heart and leaves it to speak to the women, instead of talking to them face to face. Just before Eros leaves it seems like he might choose Lana after all. Overcome by jealousy, and seeing no way out of the situation Ulrike kills Lana in her sleep. When Eros returns he finds Lana's lifeless body and Ulrike has disappeared.

Character List:

Ulrike: mezzo soprano

Lana: soprano

Eros: baritone

Ensemble:

Choir: 14 Sopranos
14 Altos
7 Tenors + Basses (always sing the same part)

The choir is positioned in an offstage stairwell for the majority of the piece. They enter the main performance space at Figure 17.

Choir always sings "ah"

Electric Organ with pedal manual, vibrato and tremolo

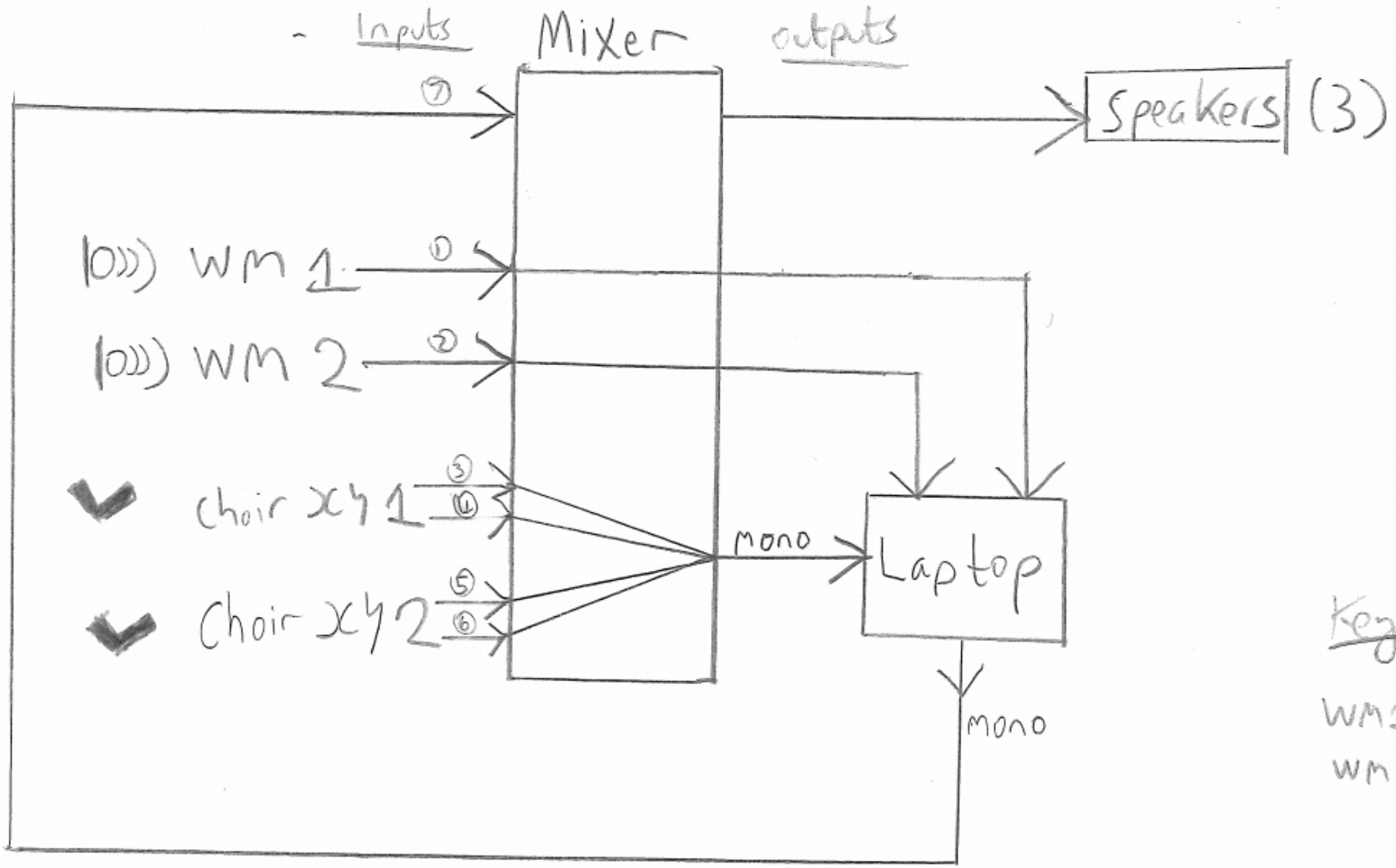
Percussion: Vibraphone (with motor), crotales, tam tam, gong, wood block

Accordion: Placed offstage with the choir, doubles all choir parts. Tacet from Figure 19 – end.

Vocoder: The voices of Ulrike and Lana should be used as modulators and the voice of the choir as the carrier. The vocoder sound should come from speakers placed towards the back of the performance space.

Duration: c. 20 mins

Technical Plan

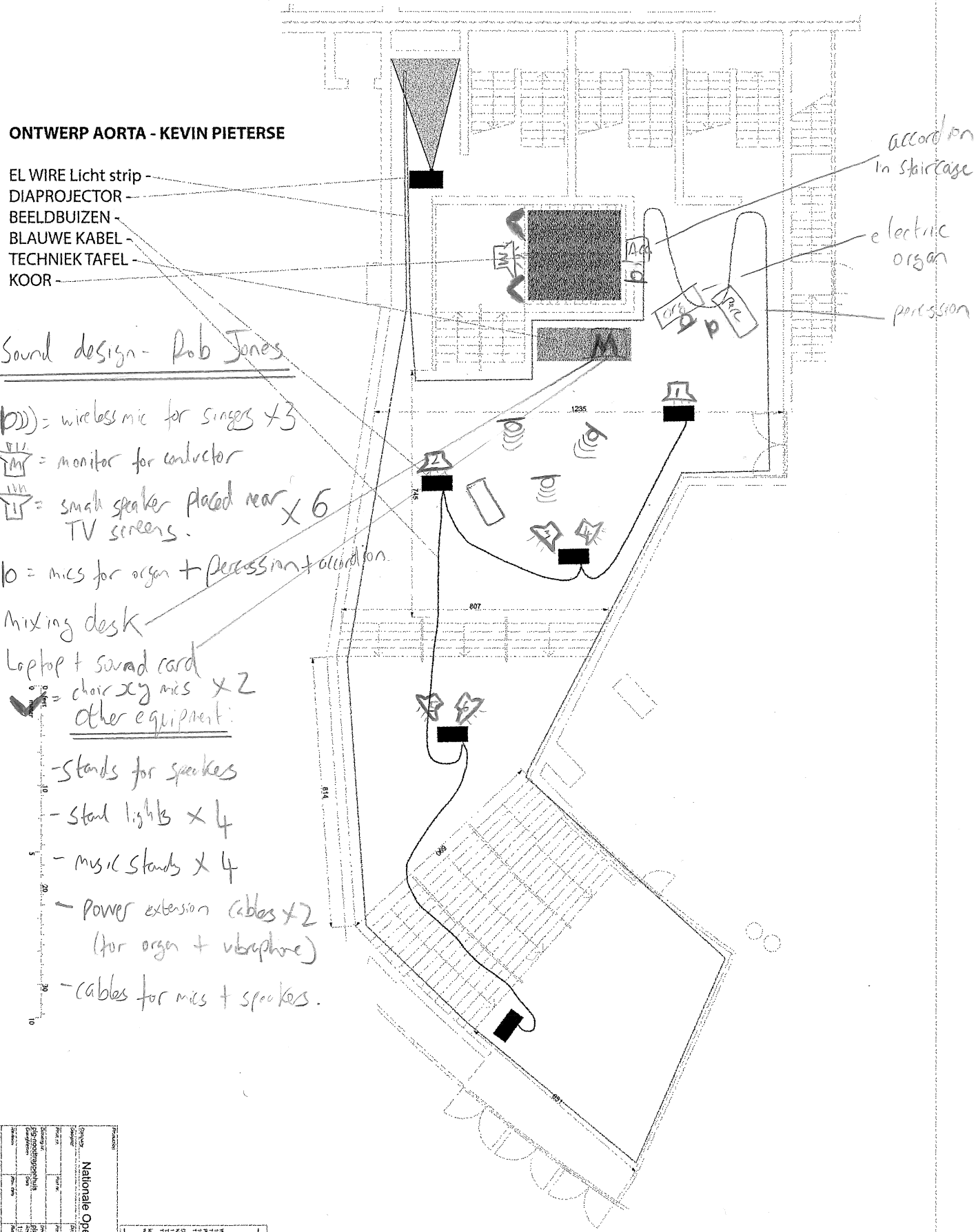


Key:

WM1 = wireless mic 1

WM2 = wireless mic 2

Tech Plan (Provisional) with Sound



Sound design - Rob Jones

- = wireless mic for singers x3
- = monitor for conductor
- = small speaker placed near TV screens. x6
- = mics for organ + percussion + accordion
- Mixing desk
- Laptop + sound card
- = choir xy mics x2

Other equipment:

- Stands for speakers
- Stand lights x4
- Music Stands x4
- Power extension cables x2 (for organ + vibraphone)
- Cables for mics + speakers.

Nationale Opera & Ballet

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*het koor zingt altijd "ah"
the choir always sings "ah"

Aorta

Libretto by Tom Bronsema
English Translation by Rob Jones

Scene 1 - Intro Ulrike and Lana

Rob Jones

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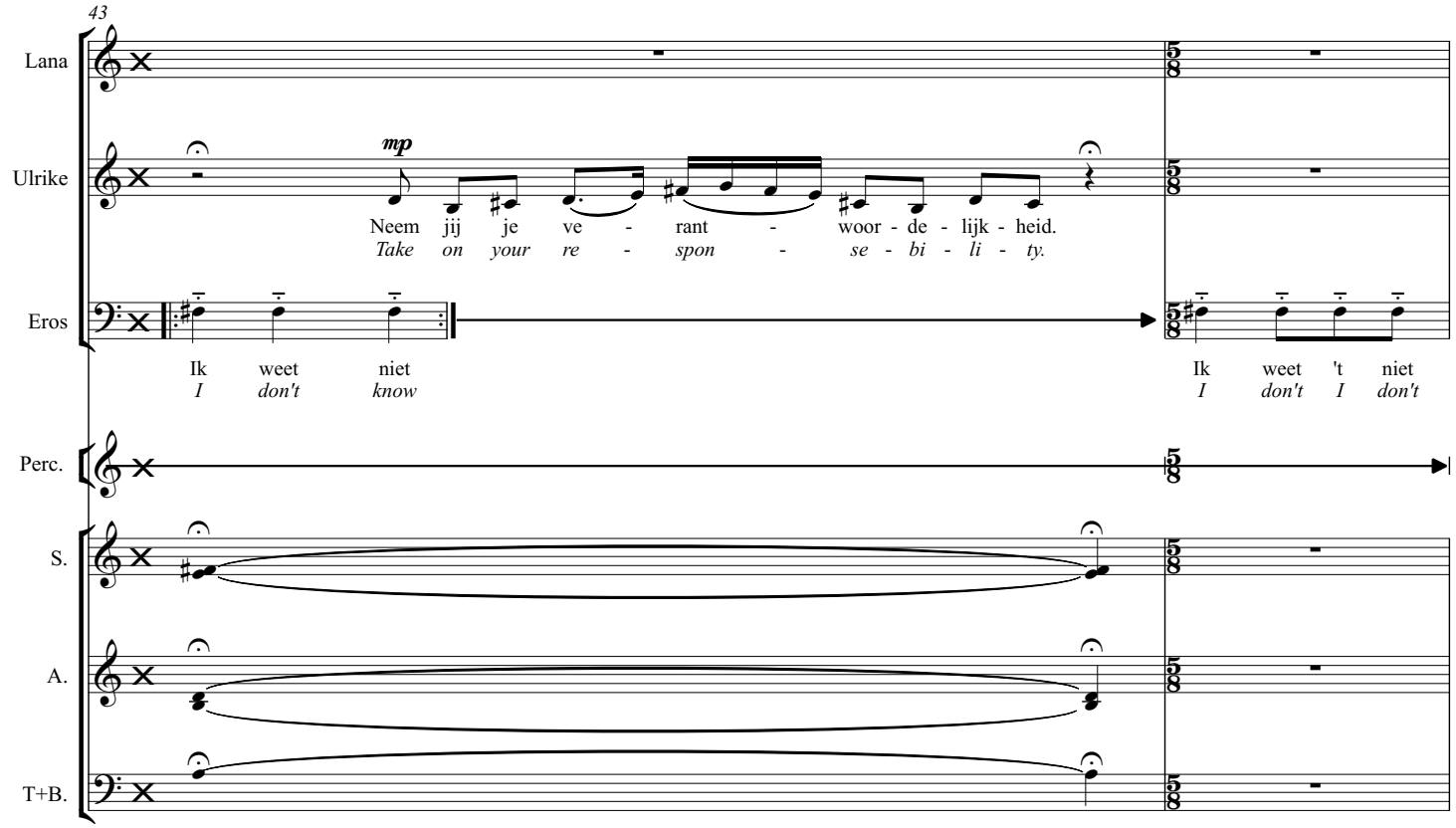
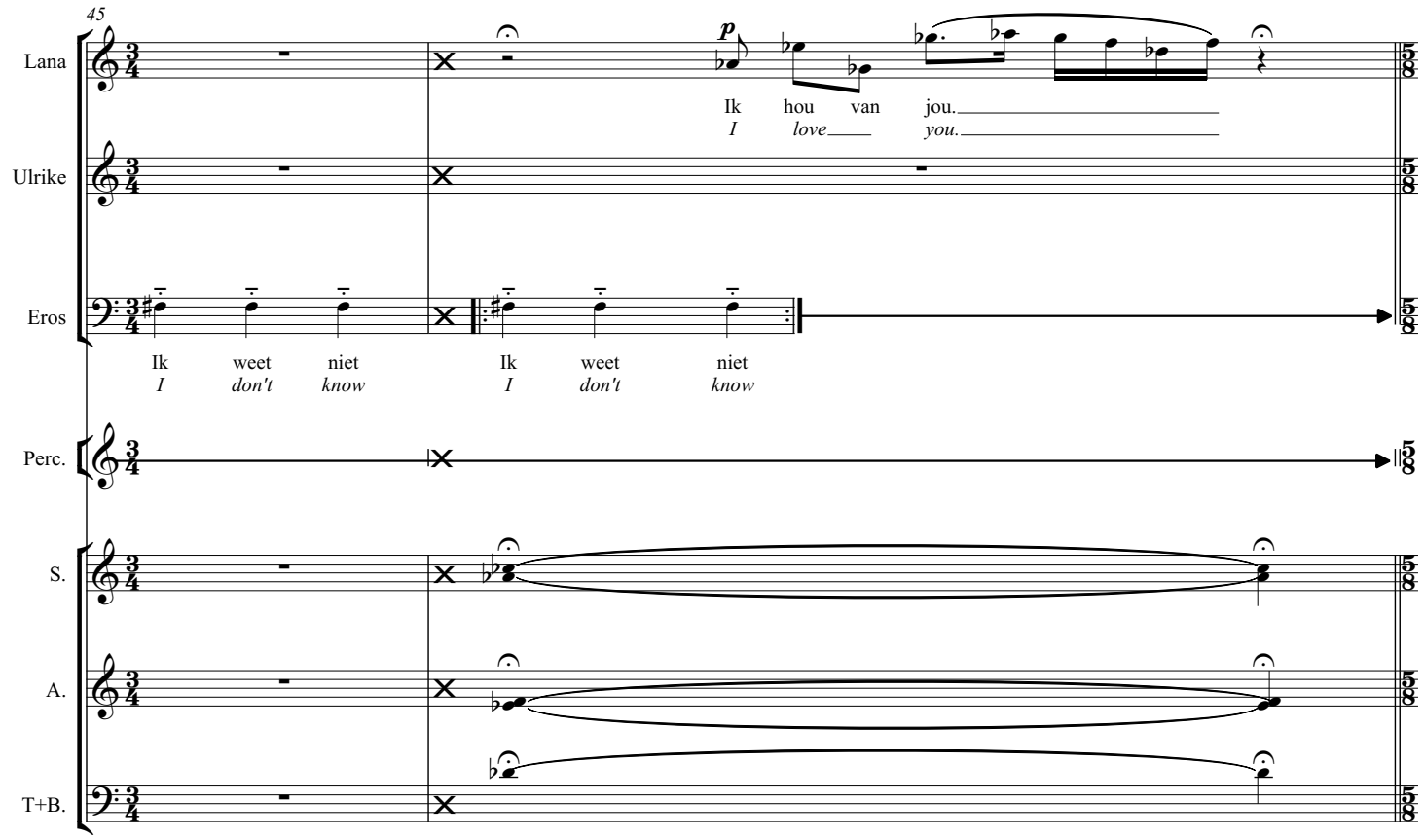
7
Ulrike
De klank van stil - te in mijn huis.
The sound of si - lence in my house.
Perc.
mp pp
mp pp
mp pp
ped. sim.
S.
A.
p
*always sing with "ah"
T+B.
10
Ulrike
Ooo Ooo
Ooo
Perc.
mp pp
mp pp
mp pp
S.
p
A.
T+B.
14
Ulrike
De klank van jouw naam is nu als ruis.
The sound of your name is now just noise.
Perc.
mp pp
S.
A.
p
T+B.

16
Ulrike
Toch heb ik jou no - dig,
And yet I still need you,
voor het ver-sie-ren van mijn ver-driet.
to co - ver my sad-ness.
Perc.
mp pp
S.
A.
p
T+B.
2
20
Witheld, introverted sound
pp quasi recitativo
Lana
Ik wil zeg - gen wat ik niet kan zeg - gen.
I want to say what I can - not say.
Perc.
S.
p
A.
T+B.
22
Lana
Wat ik kan zeg - gen, is niet wat ik wil zeg - gen.
What I can say, is not what I want to say.
Jouw naam is
Your name is
Perc.
S.
p
A.
p
T+B.

25
Lana
als het u - ni - ver- sum.
like the u - ni - verse.
Mijn hart staat op
My heart keeps on
Perc.
S.
A.
T+B.
p
29
Lana
her - ha - ling met de woor - den:
re - pea - ting the words:
Perc.
S.
A.
T+B.
p
32
Lana
Ik hou van jou.
I love you.
Ooo
Perc.
S.
A.
T+B.
p

Scene 1B - Trio, Eros can't decide


43
Lana
Ulrike
Eros
Perc.
S.
A.
T+B.
mp
Neem jij je ve - rant - woor - de - lijk - heid.
Take on your re - spon - se - bi - li - ty.
Ik weet niet
I don't know
Ik weet 't niet
I don't I don't


45
Lana
Ulrike
Eros
Perc.
S.
A.
T+B.
p
Ik hou van jou.
I love you.
Ik weet niet
I don't know
Ik weet niet
I don't know

4 (in time with perc.)
47
mp
mp
Eros
Ik weet 't niet Ik weet 't niet Ik weet niet Ik weet niet Ik weet niet Ik weet niet
I don't I don't I don't I don't I don't know I don't know I don't know I don't know
motor on
l.v.
(in time with Eros)
Perc.
mf
53
Eros
Ik weet niet Ik weet niet Ik weet niet Ik weet niet
I don't know I don't know I don't know I don't know
Perc.
57
No rit.
Eros
Ik weet Ik weet Ik Ik Ik
I know I know I I I
To Tam-Tam.
Perc.

Scene 2 - The Heart

5 ♩=106

62

Eros cuts out his heart and leaves it at the feet of the two women. Eros then exits the performance space.

Stage.

at any dotted line, repeat back to the beginning

Org.

mf fast vibrato and tremelo

70

6

7

The heart speaks.

Stage.

Heart

"Had ik een schaduw"
"If I had a shadow -"

Perc.

Tam-Tam

pp

("Had ik een schaduw")

Voc.

Modulator = voice of "Eros"
Carrier= brass sythnesizer

Org.

("Had ik een schaduw")

76
8
Heart
"Dan kon ik beiden liefhebben"
"Then I could love them both"
Perc.
Tam-Tam
p
("Dan kon ik beiden liefhebben")
Org.
("Dan kon ik beiden liefhebben")
81
Heart
Perc.
Org.
86
9
Heart
"De zon wordt mijn talisman in de liefde"
"The son is the symbol of my love"
Perc.
Tam-Tam
mp
("De zon wordt mijn talisman in de liefde")
Org.
("De zon wordt mijn talisman in de liefde")

10
91
Heart
"Maar hoeveel mogelijkheiden kent het hart?"
"But how many options does the heart have?"
Perc.
Tam-Tam
mf
("Maar hoeveel mogelijkheden kent het hart?")
Org.
("Maar hoeveel mogelijkheden kent het hart?")
94
Heart
Perc.
Org.
11
100
Heart
"Wanneer het gevangen zit in een lichaam?"
"When it's imprisoned in a body?"
Tam-Tam
Perc.
f
("Wanneer het gevangen zit in een lichaam")
Org.
("Wanneer het gevangen zit in een lichaam")

103
Heart
Perc.
Org.

108
Heart
Perc.
Org.

Scene 3A - Lana and Ulrike Duet

12 ♩=42-52

113

Lana and Ulrike have an a discussion.

Stage.

Lana

in time with Ulrike
slightly quieter than Ulrike
p

Daar kan ik niets aan doen.
I can't do any-thing about that.

De lief - - de,
Love,

Ulrike

in time with Lana
mp *slightly louder than Lana*

Hier kom jij niet mee weg.
You don't come a - way with me.

Kijk wat je doet.
Look at what you're do - ing.

Perc.

colla parte: in time with soloists

Crotales
l.v.
mp

Tam-tam
mp

Tam-tam

Voc.

S.

p colla parte: follow the soloists

A.

p colla parte: follow the soloists

T+B.

p colla parte: follow the soloists

Org.

no vib.
4' colla parte: follow the soloists
pp

pp <

mf > ***pp***

8'

Ped.

no vib.
16'
pp

115
Lana
De lief - de, die zo-maar kan toe-slaan.
Love, just like that can strike.
Die_ kun je
You can
het kwa - lijk ne - men.
blame it.
Ulrike
Kijk wat je doet.
Look at what you are do - ing.
Een on ge - bo_ren kind,
An un - born_ child,
is nu al ge - doemd.
Is al - rea - dy doomed.
Perc.
Tam-tam
Tam-tam
Tam-tam
Voc.
S.
A.
T+B.
Org.
mf pp
mf pp
mf pp
Ped.

118
Lana
Een mis - daad?
A mis - take?
Maar het ge - luk zou toch moe - ten lo - nen?
But hap - pi - ness will re - ward you?
Ulrike
'T is een mis - daad,
It is a mis - take,
't is gruw - e - lijk.
it is hor - ri - ble.
Perc.
Tam-tam
Tam-tam
To Vib.
Voc.
S.
A.
T+B.
Org.
mf > pp
mp
Ped.

Scene 3B - Ulrike kills Lana

13 ♩=96

120 Lana and Ulrike go to their separate places.

Stage.

Perc.

Org. *Full sound, with subtle vibrato*

p

126 Vibraphone motor off

Perc. *mf*

Org.

132 **14** Ulrike thinks about killing Lana, and eventually moves towards her.

Stage.

Lana *mp* Daar kan ik
I can't do

Ulrike *mp* Het kan toch niet zo zijn. Dat een
It can-not be this way. That a

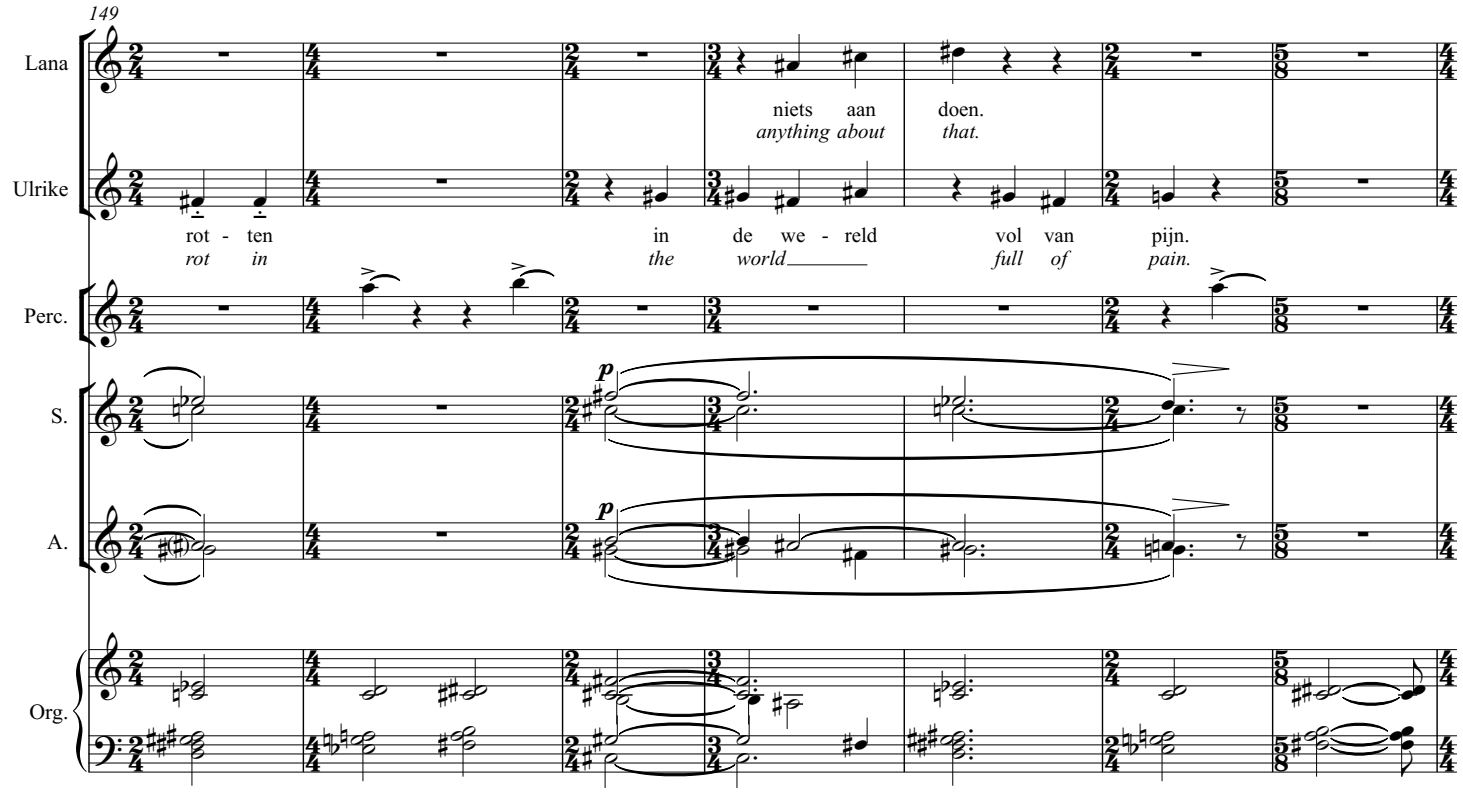
Perc.

S. *p*

A. *p*

Org.

140
Lana
niets aan doen.
anything about that.
Daar kan ik
I can't do
Ulrike
vrucht van de lief - de,
fruit of love,
Moet
must
Perc.
S.
A.
Org.


149
Lana
niets aan doen.
anything about that.
Ulrike
rot - ten in de we - reld vol van pijn.
rot in the world full of pain.
Perc.
S.
A.
Org.

156
Lana
Ulrike
Perc.
S.
A.
Org.
162
Lana
Ulrike
Perc.
S.
A.
Org.
Daar kan ik
I can't do
Het kan toch.
It is still pos-si - ble.
Een vrucht van de lief - de.
A fruit of love.
p
p

169
Lana
Daar kan ik
I can't do
Ulrike
Moet rot ten in
Has to rot
Perc.
S.
A.
Org.
176
Lana
niets aan doen.
anything about that.
Niets aan doen.
Anything about that.
Ulrike
de we reld vol van pijn.
in the world full of pain.
Perc.
S.
A.
Org.

Vocoder Stops Here

183

mf

Ulrike

In de naam van de lief - de.
In the name of love.

Perc.

S.

A.

Org.

16'

Ped.

190

15 Ulrike kills Lana.

Stage.

Ulrike

In de naam van mijn on - ge - bo - ren kind.
In the name of my un - born child.

Perc.

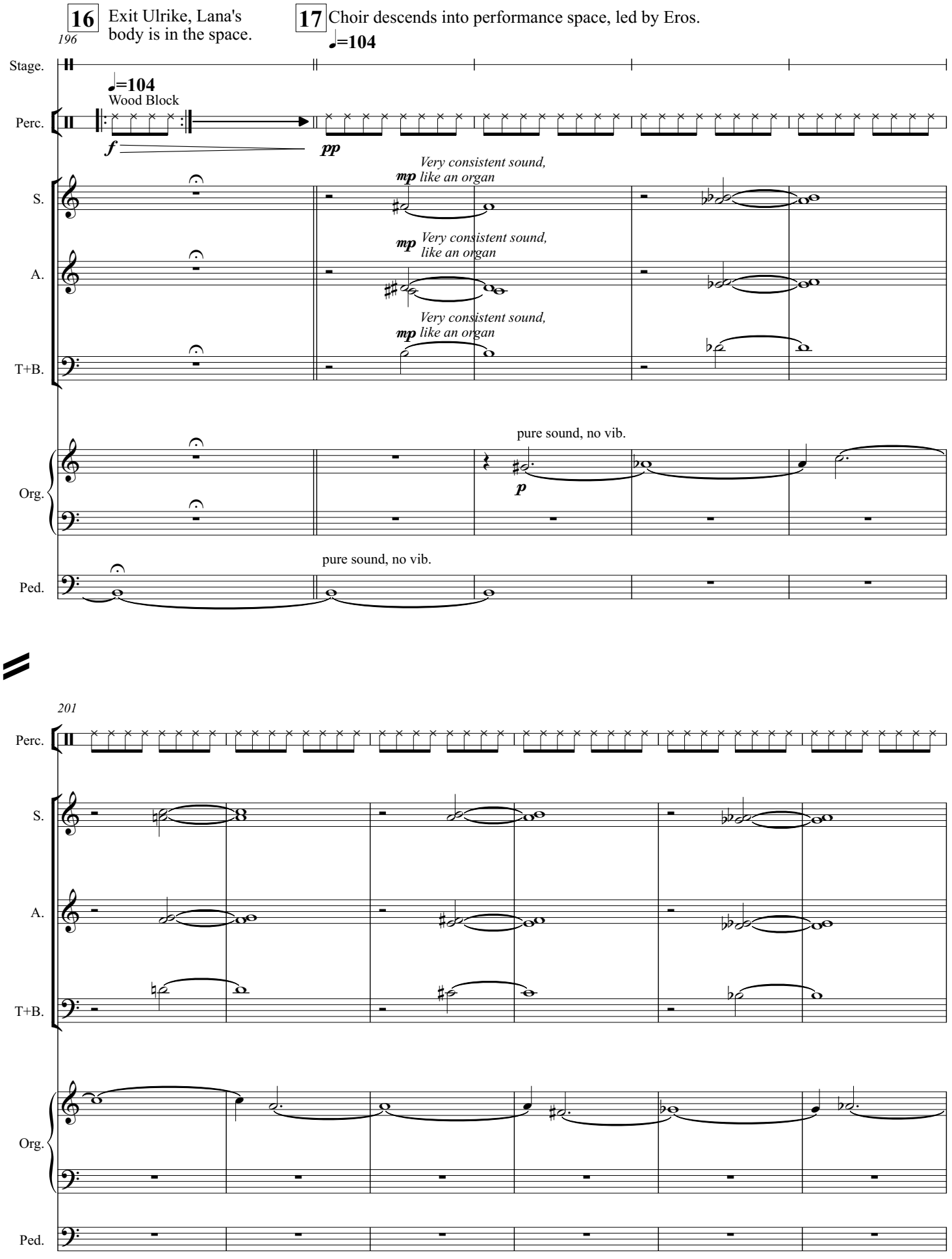
S.

A.

Org.

Ped.

Scene 3C - Choir comes onstage, Eros' Epilogue



207 **18** Repeat until the whole choir is in main performance space.

Stage.

Perc.

Sop 1 joins after 4-5 repetitions

S. *mp continue consistent, organ-like sound*

A. *mp continue consistent, organ-like sound*

T+B. *mp continue consistent, organ-like sound*

Org.

[Play pedals only when tenors and basses reach the stairs - after around 8-9 repetitions]

Ped.

212

Perc. (cresc. last time only)

S.

A.

T+B.

Org.

Ped.

217 **19** Choir gathers around Lana's body, Eros sings.

Stage.

Eros — *mp reflective*

Har - te - loos, har - ten - bre - ker, hart - slag. Wat is de
Heart - less, heart_ brea - ker, heart- beat. What is___

vibraphone — *f* — *mf* — gradually fade to nothing

Perc. — *f*

S. — *mp* stagger breathing, if neccessary

A. — *mp* stagger breathing, if neccessary

T+B. — *mp* stagger breathing, if neccessary

Org.

Ped.

224

Eros

lief - de, wan-neer het twee ge - zich___ ten_ heeft?_
love,___ when_ it has___ two_____ fa - ces?

Perc.

S.

A.

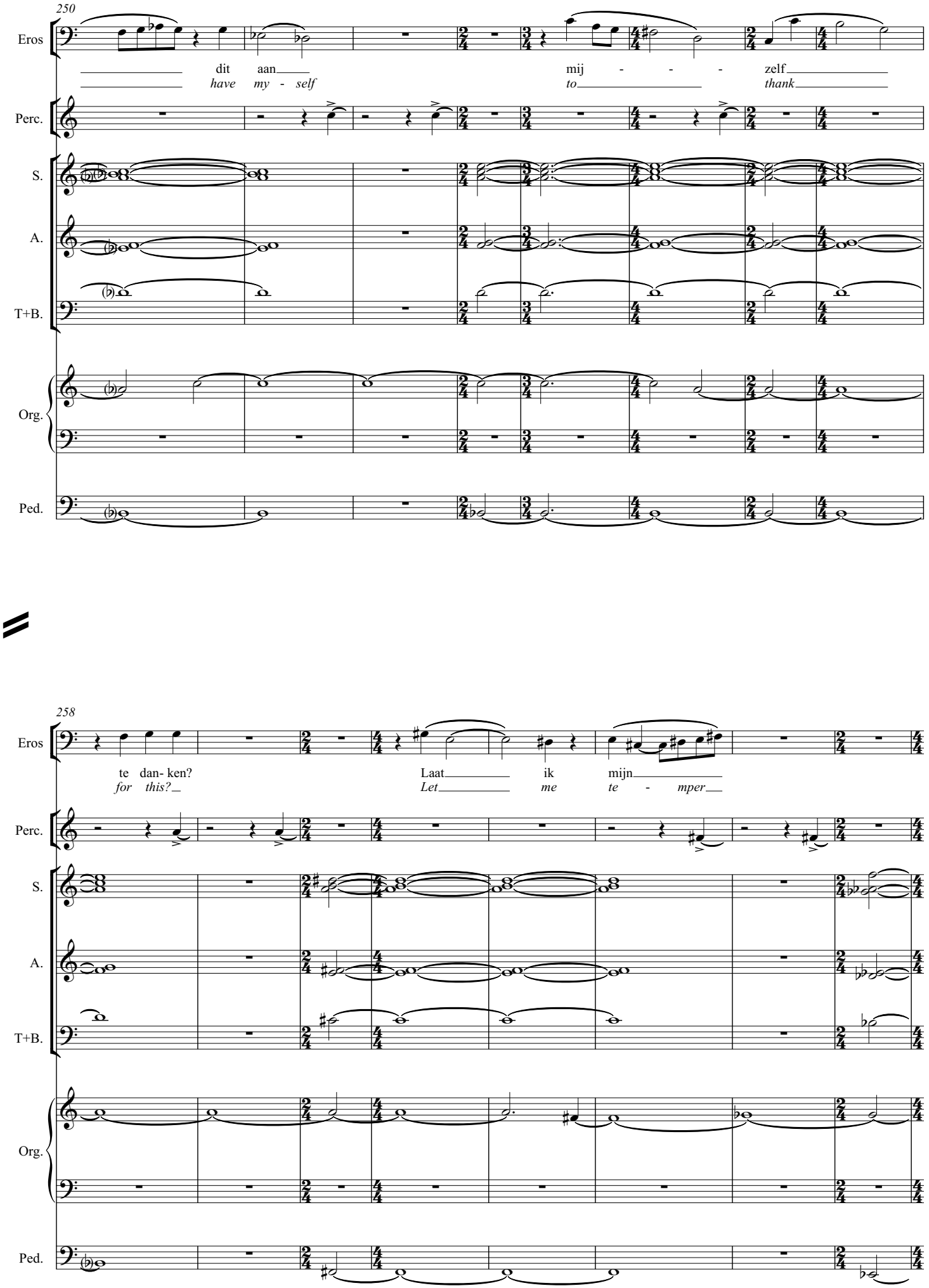
T+B.

Org.

Ped.

233
Eros
Perc.
S.
A.
T+B.
Org.
Ped.
Of ma - skers draagt, wie er-om vraagt.
Or if it wears masks, who cares a - bout

241
Choir leave the space as one, they continue singing.
Stage.
Eros
Perc.
S.
A.
T+B.
Org.
Ped.
it
Of draait het toch om re - flec- tie?
If it turns in - to re - flec - tion?
Heb ik
Do I


250
Eros
dit aan mij - - - zelf
have my - self to thank
Perc.
S.
A.
T+B.
Org.
Ped.
258
Eros
te dan- ken? Laat ik mijn
for this? Let me te - mper
Perc.
S.
A.
T+B.
Org.
Ped.

All choir are offstage, still singing.

266

Eros: ge - dach - - - ten tem - - pe - ren.
my *thoughts.*

Perc.

S.

A.

T+B.

Org.

Ped.

271 **20**

Stage.

Eros: ***p*** *quasi recitativo*
Hoop is het ge - loof in de lief - de.
Hope *is* *the be - lief* *in* *love.*

Tam-tam
mf

Perc.

S.

A.

T+B.

Org.

Ped.